



Mediated Storytelling at Islamic Arab Satellite-television

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WOCMES 2010

Barcelona, World Capital of Studies on the Middle East and North Africa



Prince Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan delivered the opening lecture in an event that also had the participation of the Vice-President of the Government of Catalonia, Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira, the Director General of the IEMed, Senén Florensa, the Rector of UAB, Anna Ripoll, and the President of the WOCMES International Advisory Council, Günter Meyer.

From 19th to 24th July 2010, the World Congress on Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES) turned the city of Barcelona into the world capital of studies on these regions. Over 2,700 renowned experts, academics and researchers from 72 countries presented their studies, debated and shared points of view during five intensive working days.

Organised by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), WOCMES Barcelona 2010 programmed more than 500 academic sessions, held in blocks of 30 sessions, on a wide range of disciplines and issues focusing on the Middle East and North Africa including political and economic aspects, the environment, literature, history, gender issues, religion, town planning, contemporary artistic creation and identities.

The large participation, of broad academic and geographical representativeness, and the high scientific level of the working sessions have meant for Barcelona an important step in the consolidation of WOCMES as a congress of international reference after the two previous years (2002 in Germany and 2006 in Jordan). Moreover, the high level of participation also ratified the expectations following the candidature of Barcelona in 2008 to host the congress, when it was chosen in an open vote over other candidate cities.

The scientific programme, which was prepared for two years based on the proposals and contributions of 2,421 academics, was accompanied by a notable and intensive cultural agenda including a cinema festival, eight exhibitions, theatre and music performances, and a book fair.

WOCMES: in Search of a Route of Ideas

"After the Silk Route, we need a route of ideas." In this spirit, Prince **Hassan Bin Talal** of Jordan opened the WOCMES Barcelona 2010 Congress in an inaugural lecture in which he emphasised the difficult international situation of the region and he pledged his commitment to dialogue to unite the peoples and countries of the Mediterranean.

Listening to the Prince, in a full auditorium, were some of the academics who from that moment and until 24th July would examine the state and progress of research at an international level on the Middle East and North Africa with a multidisciplinary approach.



The opening took place to a full auditorium.



Reception tables of the congress participants.

Some of the issues addressed or which awoke more interest were the analysis of the political situation in the region, the democratic advances and the questions linked to social evolution, although youth, the media and Internet, and the new forms of artistic expression received the attention of many congress sessions.

WOCMES Barcelona 2010 represented for the host country and city an almost unique opportunity to learn first hand from the main experts and researchers of two regions, the Middle East and North Africa, which have an outstanding world influence in political, social, cultural and economic issues. Moreover, it meant for the participants themselves the opportunity for an academic dissemination of their work. In this respect, academics and professors from Spanish and Catalan universities, who took

advantage of the event to participate in the congress in greater numbers than in previous years, shared working sessions with academics from prestigious Anglo-Saxon universities such as Harvard, Stanford, UC Berkeley, Georgetown, Cambridge, Oxford, Leeds, Glasgow and Edinburgh, and other universities such as the Middle East Technical University and Bogazici University (both in Turkey); the universities of Nice Sophia-Antipolis and Paris Descartes (France); Freie Universität and Zentrum Moderner Orient (Germany); the universities of Turin, Milan and Naples (Italy); Cairo University and The American University in Cairo (Egypt); Abou Bekr Belkaid Tlemcen (Algeria); the universities of Teheran, Isfahan and Islamic Azad (Iran); the Hebrew University and those of Tel Aviv and Haifa (Israel); those of Tokyo, Kyoto and Nagoya (Japan); the universities of Tunis and Manouba (Tunisia) and the University Mohammed Premier Oujda (Morocco), among many others.



The congress was attended by participants from over 70 countries.



Session "New Media Borderlands in the Middle East".



Session "Reporting from the Middle East".

A Framework Favourable to Dialogue in the Mediterranean

The IEMed set out on a long journey of over two years of preparation leading in July to the WOCMES Barcelona 2010 Congress. The efforts made have been very well worth it. The third year of the congress has achieved the highest figures of participation and has again revealed the capital status of city of Barcelona in the Mediterranean as a neuralgic centre of dialogue and debate on issues related to stability, cooperation and progress in the region.

Our main objective is the promotion of activities, projects and actions contributing to mutual awareness, exchanges and cooperation between different countries, societies and cultures. Although our undertakings are framed within the Mediterranean, the current, complex, interdependent and globalised world obliges us to take into account everything occurring further beyond, because in the end it affects our reality.

In this respect, WOCMES Barcelona 2010 has incorporated for the first time, along with research on the Middle East and North Africa and the Asian Muslim states, studies on the Mediterranean as a region. An issue that could not be ignored this year, when the Congress was held in the city where the Permanent Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean is based.

WOCMES Barcelona 2010 has been a privileged space of exchange and meeting for scientific and academic knowledge for more than 2,700 participants. An invitation both to dialogue and cooperation between people from 72 countries from a wide range of disciplines and fields of study. It has been, therefore, one of the best instruments in which the IEMed could have involved itself to advance in our mission, which is to work for a Mediterranean of peace and stability, shared prosperity and dialogue between cultures and civilisations.

Senén Florensa
Director General of the IEMed

The programme, published in English and French, is an updated guide to experts and issues of interest in the study of the Middle East and North Africa.
(Available at www.iemed.org/wocmes)

Music, Cinema, Theatre and Exhibitions

WOCMES has included an intensive cultural programme and several social events

Film Festival and Theatre

Around twenty films from Iran, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, Morocco and France, among other countries, were screened at the WOCMES Film Festival, organised in collaboration with the **International Association of Independent Producers of the Mediterranean (APIMED)**. It enjoyed the presence in two debates of the directors **Hamid Rahmanian** (Iran), who presented *The Glass House*, and **Najwa Najjar** (Palestine), who presented *Pomegranates and Myrrh*. The UAB auditorium, coinciding with the congress, also programmed two dance performances.



Debate with the director Hamid Rahmanian.

Concerts

The **Orquestra Àrab de Barcelona** offered the inaugural concert of WOCMES Barcelona 2010. The university campus also hosted the performance by the Algerian **Neila Benbey**, who offered a journey through the great classics of popular music in her country. At the **Palau de la Música**, within the presentation of the WOCMES 2010 Awards, **Folkincats** performed Catalan folk music.

Folkincats.



Book Fair

Around twenty publishers, as well as university press, NGOs and other associations from several countries, displayed their publications in the congress venue.



Institutional Support

The congress participants visited Barcelona City Hall (in the photo) and the Palau de la Generalitat de Catalunya, where the Vice-President of the Government of Catalonia, Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira, offered them an institutional reception.



WOCMES 2010 Awards

Barcelona honoured two of the congress participants with the WOCMES 2010 Award for their career and the outstanding academic contribution the Middle Eastern studies: **Roger Owen**, A.J. Meyer Professor of Middle Eastern History at Harvard University (USA) and **Josef Van Ess**, Emeritus Professor of Islamic Studies and Semitic Languages at the University of Tübingen (Germany). The event took place at the Palau de la Música in Barcelona.



Roger Owen receives the WOCMES 2010 Award from Senén Florensa, Günter Meyer and Laura Feliu, Academic Coordinator of the congress.

Exhibitions

In different venues of the congress it was also possible to visit eight history, photography, sculpture and painting exhibitions. The exhibitions, which came from Yemen, Australia, France, the United States or Spain, were: "**Le Yémen en dernier**"; "**Persian Illustration & Script 18th Century**"; "**Poètes de la Méditerranée : poètes arabes contemporains**"; "**Projecting and Restoring in Khadimiya (Baghdad, Iraq)**"; "**Musique et danse au Sahara. La tradition dans le contemporain**"; "**Iran: Images From Beneath a Chador**"; "**Soufisme et politique au Pakistan**"; "**The Media in the Mediterranean Sea**" and "**The Mediterranean of the 20th Century: Realities and Images**", which could be seen at the Palau Robert in Barcelona until 29th August.

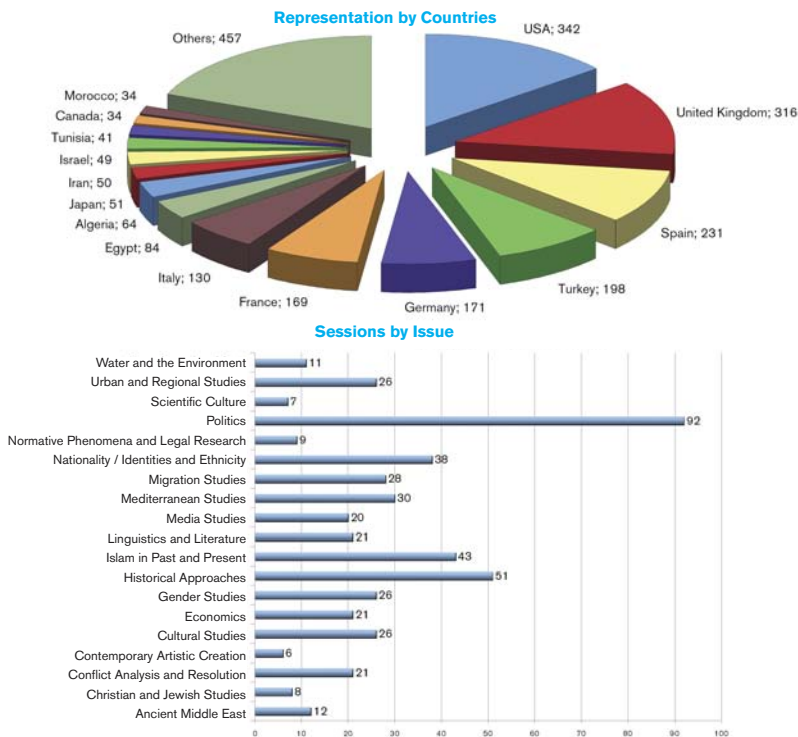


Exhibition "Musique et danse au Sahara. La tradition dans le contemporain".

WOCMES in Figures

After more than two years of preparations, WOCMES Barcelona 2010 brought together in the Catalan capital over 2,700 participants, largely surpassing the participation of the two previous years. Especially notable was the presence of academics from the Anglo-Saxon world, Mediterranean coun-

tries (headed by Turkey), European countries (mainly Spain, Germany, France and Italy) and Asian countries (Japan, in particular). The more than 500 sessions attended by the congress participants addressed a wide range of issues from different approaches and disciplines.



The Congress Goals

Encouraging Mutual Awareness

Researchers and experts shared the results of studies and research that may contribute to improving mutual awareness in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Barcelona introduced for the first time research on the Mediterranean in the congress debates.

Invigorating Cooperation Research Networks

With the creation of links between researchers, the congress promoted a participatory and shared historical vision. Moreover, it was the opportunity to publicise research carried out in the South – often of difficult access – and increased North-South academic and regional cooperation.

Generating New Approaches to Breaking Down Stereotypes

The congress debates prompted new points of view and innovative approaches contributing to breaking stereotypes and rigid interpretations, which are often deeply-rooted in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Providing an Overall View

WOCMES managed to provide an overall view of the whole of the region by dealing with 18 wide-ranging issues, from water and the environment, town planning, politics and the media to migrations including studies on the Mediterranean region, Islam, history, economics or analysis and resolution of conflicts.

Academic Excellence

Two committees of experts (international and scientific) guaranteed the high academic level of the congress programme and the presence of prestigious figures from the main world universities.

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The European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), founded in 1989, is a consortium comprising the Government of Catalonia, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and Barcelona City Council. It incorporates civil society through its Board of Trustees and its Advisory Council formed by Mediterranean universities, companies, organisations and personalities of renowned prestige.

In accordance with the principles of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's Barcelona Process, and today with the objectives of the Union for the Mediterranean, the aim of the IEMed is to foster actions and projects which contribute to mutual understanding, exchange and cooperation between the different Mediterranean countries, societies and cultures, as well as to promote the progressive construction of a space of peace and stability, shared prosperity and dialogue between cultures and civilisations in the Mediterranean.

Adopting a clear role as a think tank specialised in Mediterranean relations based on a multidisciplinary and networking approach, the IEMed encourages analysis, understanding and cooperation through the organisation of seminars, research projects, debates, conferences and publications, in addition to a broad cultural programme.

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www.iemed.org www.iemed.org/wocmes

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